

# BREAST CANCER MONTH

By Kathleen Meunier



October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The VA will be celebrating Breast Cancer Awareness Month on Friday, October 22, 2010, with a one-mile walk and "Houses of Hope" reception from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The walk will begin and end behind the VRRC (trailer 35). The Houses of Hope reception will feature birdhouses made by Veterans in the Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center (PRRC) as well cookies, also made by PRRC Veterans. There is an opportunity for others to make small birdhouses at the reception. Birdhouses made by PRRC Veterans will be donated to breast cancer survivors. For more information, call Beth Grady at (401) 273-7100 ext. 6191.



# VETERANS WATCH

VOL 1, ISS 4

Providence VA Medical Center

FALL 2010



Newsletter Written FOR Veterans BY Veterans

## "SHE SERVED TOO"

This issue of *Veterans Watch* is dedicated to Women Veterans!

### MEET THE STAFF!

### Veterans Helping Veterans

Spotlight on:

**BETH GRADY**

By Bob Goudreau

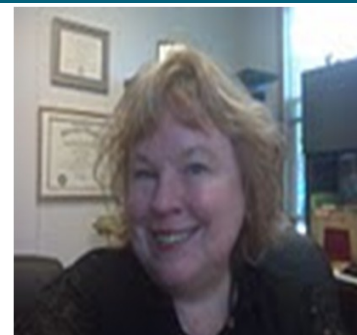
Beth Grady is the Women Veterans Program Manager at PVAMC. Beth came to us in January 2009 after spending two years as the Administrative Officer for Geriatrics and Extended Care at Togus VA. ME.

In 1979 Beth began her military career in the Army at Fort McLellan, AL. Her basic training company was one of the first units to integrate men and women. For her Advance Individual Training, Beth transferred to Ft Sam Houston participating in Laboratory Tech School. Her first duty assignment brought her to the Ft Stewart Hospital in Hinesville, GA. She was transferred to the 2nd Infantry Division at Camp

Casey, Korea and she rounded out her enlistment at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research as a Research Lab Tech in 1983.

Upon returning to civilian life, Beth pursued a BA in Sociology from the University of Maryland at College Park in 1987. By 1989 she was awarded a Master Degree of Social Work from Rutgers University. After graduation Beth was employed by St. Peters Medical Center in New Brunswick, NJ as an emergency room social worker.

In 1990, Beth was given a direct commission in the Air Force. Because of her educational background, the Air Force utilized her expertise by placing her in various positions to assist military families. In 1994, while stationed at Keesler Air Force base. MS,



Beth Grady, LICSW

she was the one social worker for a 350 bed hospital and rendered valuable support to families during Operation Desert Storm. Later that year, Beth transferred to Misawa Air Force Base, Japan to run the Family Support Center, where she earned the honor of Officer of the Quarter and Officer of the Year.

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## PVAMC WOMEN'S HEALTH

By Kathleen Meunier

The focus of this quarter's Veterans Watch is on Women Veterans. Beth Grady is the Coordinator for Women's Program and can be reached at (401) 273-7100, ext. 6191. The PVAMC is working to be more women-friendly. There is a Women's Health bulletin board in the main hall across from the

blood bank. The case is used to recognize female Veterans and historical happenings as they relate to female Veterans. It also gives information on current events. One event that is coming up is "From Tents to Tea". This is a coffee social where female Veterans can socialize and get updated information. This will take place on Jan. 14, 2011 on the 5<sup>th</sup>

floor, classroom 3, from 9:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m. The new Inpatient Mental Health Unit is also more female-friendly, with private bathrooms. The Women's Program also tracks flu shots, mammograms, and annual exams of women Veterans. Eventually all women veterans will be under one clinic. Remember: "She Served Too"!

## BETH GRADY

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Upon her return to the U.S., Beth was stationed at the Air Force Academy as the Chief of Family Advocacy. During this time, she was also Team Chief of the Effective Living Program, which focused on prevention programming for airmen. Dover Air Force Base, DE was her next base where she again was Chief of Family Advocacy and developed the first case management position for adults.

During her military career, Beth also served at Wilford Hall Medical Center, Lackland Air Force Base, TX, where she developed the first pediatric behavioral health program within primary care targeting families with deployed loved ones. She retired out of Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, NC as a program manager for their substance abuse program. In addition to her regular military duties, Ms. Grady was a field instructor for the graduate schools of Social Work at the University of Denver, Delaware State University, and Our Lady of the Lakes University in Texas.

During her time in service, Beth received many awards to include a Joint Services Commendation medal, a Meritorious Service medal with 2 oak leave clusters, and the national Defense Service medal.

## DID YOU KNOW?

*By Ron Whitcomb*

Martha Raye or Colonel Maggie as she was called, was given an honorary commission by President Johnson for her work at USO shows during WW2, Korea, and Vietnam. A special consideration was made for her upon her death so that she could be buried in the Special Forces Cemetery at Ft Bragg, NC. She is the only woman in the cemetery.

## MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS MONTH GALLERY OPENING!

*By Jessica Zuehlke*

In order to celebrate Mental Illness Awareness Week 2010 (October 4-8), Kathleen Meunier, Peer Support Technician, teamed with the

PVAMC Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center (PRRC) and PeaceLove Studios in Pawtucket, RI to organize a Gallery Opening showcasing artwork created by Veterans with Mental Illness. The

aim of the show was to celebrate the creativity of people with mental illness. Pieces were donated by Veterans in the VRR/PRRC and also Veterans from PeaceLove Studios in Pawtucket, RI.

Despite the rain, over 50 people at-

tended the reception to enjoy the artwork and snacks (donated by staff from the VRR/PRRC). The artwork will be on display in Trailers 35 and 36 throughout the month of October.



**Veterans Norman Cabral and Ed Houlihan enjoy the artwork.**



**PVAMC staff members Bill Burney and Mark Manfredi admire the art.**

## WOMEN PARTNERS SUPPORT GROUP

*By Bob Goudreau*

Many women whose husbands and significant others are returning from being deployed in a combat zone, are realizing that those loved ones have changed. Sometimes the stress associated with trying to understand a changed loved one can be overwhelming. As Dr. Clarisse DiCandia explains, many long term partners of Veterans with PTSD may develop what is described as secondary post traumatic stress disorder. When the Veteran has PTSD, the partners develop a version of it also.

When a Veteran deploys, many women partners report that it feels like the whole family is deploying. Without their spouse, women partners may feel changes in role models, double responsibilities, and added stress. They may be waiting for letters, watching the news reports, and living in a constant state of worry until the spouse returns. However, upon homecoming, a new set of stressors evolve. Questions

may arise, such as, Has he changed? It's been so long, does he still love me? Why is he angry all the time? Left unchecked, these stressors can become devastating. That is why the Vet Center, located at 2038 Warwick Avenue, in War-

dental forum for women to better understand PTSD and other readjustment issues. They discuss coping strategies, receive mutual support, and find out they are not alone in their struggles. As the wife of one Veteran said, "He has his groups, his individual counseling, and his fellow Vets; but what do I have?"

A typical group begins with introductions and immediate concerns. The group is a time for discussing feelings and healing. It's a time for wellness and, most importantly, support from others who are dealing with similar situations. Usually the last 20 minutes of a group are reserved for relaxation exercises. If you are interested in the program or would like more information, feel free to contact Dr. DiCandia at 401-739-0167. Women partners need to be recognized for the pivotal role that they play in our Nation's Defense, and the Vet Center is leading the way in the readjustment process.



**Dr. Clarisse DiCandia**

wick, R.I. has initiated a Women Partners Support Group, headed by Dr. DiCandia. The group meets twice a month, on Thursdays from 6-7:30 p.m.

As a support group for spouses or significant others of combat Veterans, the Vet Center provides a safe and confi-

# RI CHIEF JUSTICE OF SUPREME COURT

By Martin Cappelli

Recently, I had the opportunity and privilege to speak with the Honorable Judge Frank J. Williams, a decorated Veteran with service in Vietnam and West Germany. Judge Williams was appointed Chief Justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court by Governor Lincoln Almond and unanimously confirmed by the Rhode Island General Assembly in January 2001, after serving for five years as Associate Judge for the Superior Court. As Chief Justice, he initiated many changes in our judiciary including new courthouses and outreach to the public and making the courts more accessible and user-friendly.

On December 30, 2003, the President of the United States, invited Chief Justice Williams to be a member of the Court of Military Commission review to be held in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba with the rank of Major General.

Chief Justice Williams was born and raised in Cranston, RI. He attended public school in Cranston and went on to

receive his bachelor's degree in government and history from Boston University in 1962. Upon graduation, Chief Justice Williams served for almost five years in the United States Army, rising to



Chief Justice Williams

the rank of Captain. During his military service, he served in Germany and Vietnam, receiving many awards and decorations (Bronze Star, three Air Medals, an Army Commendation Medal, two Vietnamese Campaign Medals, and a Combat Infantryman's Badge). He was also decorated by the Republic of Vietnam with, among other honors, the Gallantry Cross with Silver Star for Valor.

After returning to Rhode Island after his discharge,

Chief Justice Williams entered Boston University School of Law and graduated with a J.D. in 1970. He was admitted to the Rhode Island Bar in 1970 and to the U.S. Supreme Court Bar in 1976. He subsequently earned a masters degree in Taxation, and served as a visiting lecturer at the Rhode Island School of Design. He is an adjunct professor at Roger Williams University School of Law and the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, RI and has lectured at several universities and institutes throughout the country. Chief Justice Williams is married and resides in Richmond, RI. He has taken a personal interest in the well being of all Veterans and active members of our armed forces by visiting and speaking at our VA Medical Center and attending deployments events for the troops.

Chief Justice Williams is also one of the Nation's leading scholars on the life and times of Abraham Lincoln. In August 2000, Congress appointed him to the U.S. Abra-

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## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

By Don Sullivan

### October, 25 2007:

Staff Sgt Salvatore Giunta became the first living soldier of the OEF/OIF conflicts to be awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions in the Korengal Valley.

### November 14-16, 1965:

The battle of the Ia Drang Valley.

### December 7, 1941:

Pearl Harbor attacked by Japanese armed forces.

### November 7-December 23, 2004:

Operation Phantom Fury, the second battle of Fallujah.

### December 23, 1950:

General Walton Walker is killed in a jeep accident. General Matthew Ridgway takes command of 8<sup>th</sup> Army

### November 11, 1918:

The fighting ended in World War I.

### December 11-15, 1862:

The Battle of Fredericksburg.

### January 8, 1815:

The Battle of New Orleans.

### December 26, 1776:

The Continental Army defeats the Hessian troops at Trenton, New Jersey.



## OPERATION STAND DOWN

By David Eisenberger

The 17th Annual Operation Stand Down was held on September 17, 18 and 19, at Diamond Hill Ski Resort in Cumberland, RI.

Operation Stand Down is a non-profit organization, which was formed with one idea in mind: to help Veterans who are homeless or are at risk of being homeless. The free weekend event included services/resources for homeless Veterans in

Rhode Island, food, and military-grade tents for sleeping.

Veterans were given an ID badge upon signing up. Some of the services offered included PVAMC Primary Care checking blood pressure, giving flu shots, and HIV tests; Thundermist Dental Services giving free dental exams, Lincoln Tech Massage School giving free massages, PVAMC Bristol Veterans Home with housing information, PVAMC Mental Health with substance abuse counseling, OIF/OEF

and PTSD services, the Department of Labor, and Legal services. Free clothing and cigarettes were provided to homeless Veterans. In addition, many state politicians were in attendance. The catering was provided by Johnson & Wales and the transportation was provided by PVAMC and Operation Stand Down. The National Guard erected the tents and helped with the opening ceremonies. Operation Stand Down can be contacted at 1-800-861-8387.



# RI VETERANS COURT

By Richard Ploude

My name is Richard Ploude – I am a Rhode Island native and a proud Vietnam Veteran. When I came back from Vietnam, I had some issues that I carried with me for several years, having nobody to talk to.

As a direct result of my discontent, I was arrested for a misdemeanor offense. Luckily, it was a misdemeanor, and the Veterans Hospital was there for me and provided counseling. Because of this help, I was able to get back on my feet, rehabilitate, and positively contribute to my community. I rose to the rank of Deputy Sheriff and am a member of the Providence VA Veterans & Family Advisory Board.

Unfortunately, many of my fellow Vietnam Veterans were not so lucky. They were arrested, imprisoned and many never received the help they desperately needed. With a new generation of Veterans coming home from defending our freedom abroad, we need to ensure that history isn't repeated. According to the RAND Corporation, nearly 20 percent of Veterans who return from Iraq and Afghanistan report symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder or major depression. These disorders can lead to making undesirable decisions when soldiers come home and can lead them towards a destructive lifestyle.

One positive approach to address this gap is a Veteran's Treatment Court. A Veteran's Treatment Court is a program designed to re-habilitate Veterans by diverting them from the traditional criminal justice system and providing them with the tools necessary to lead a productive and law-abiding lifestyle. The first Veteran's Treatment Court launched in January 2008 in Buffalo, NY. The program is the first of its kind and is being used as a model for other treatment court programs being created in other parts of the country. The treatment court has received tremendous support from the VA, as they staff each session with several VA employees who are there to ensure that Veterans are enrolled into the VA Health Network. The VA employees also facilitate claim status inquiries and other needs. There are several Veteran mentors with varying degrees of experience who play an integral role in the function of the court. By giving defendants the opportunity of being guided by someone with whom they can relate to, these Veteran mentors provide an essential function to the treatment court. In fact, the program's success is often attributed to the contributions of these volunteers.

A Veteran's Treatment Court allows defenders of freedom a second chance and an opportunity to stay out of jail and, instead, positively contribute to our communities.

# THE RELAXATION RESPONSE

By Kathleen Meunier

John Deckro is part of the PVAMC RIC School of Nursing. In September, he presented a class on the Relaxation Response here at the PVAMC. John looked into the mind/body connection. He noted, "Our life is a creation of our mind...What

we think influences our feelings and our feelings influence our health." According to Mr. Deckro, the Relaxation Response requires:

- 1) A comfortable position,
- 2) A quiet environment, and
- 3) Repetitive mental stimulus and

passive disregard of intruding thoughts or noises.

The physiological effects of relaxation include, but are not limited to, decreased metabolism and decreased anxiety.



# AID & ATTENDANCE PENSION

By Joan Gaulin

Recently, my mom, who has Diabetes, was hospitalized after I found her on the side of her bed on the floor. She needed home care after discharge from the hospital that her insurance would not cover. Since she is a Gold Star Mother (my brother Bob was killed

in Vietnam) and she is a survivor of a Veteran (my dad was in the Army), she may be eligible for the Aid & Attendance Pension.

The Aid and Attendance (A&A) Pension provides benefits for Veterans and surviving spouses who require the regular attendance of another person to assist in eating, bathing, dress-

ing and undressing or taking care of similar needs. It also includes individuals who are blind or patients in a nursing home because of mental or physical incapacity. Assisted care in an assisting living facility also qualifies.

For more info, visit [www.Veteranaid.org](http://www.Veteranaid.org).



# ONLINE TOOLS FOR VETS

By Don Sullivan

A new web portal called "ebenefits" has been established as a joint project between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the DOD. Ebenefits will allow the service member, Veteran, and family

member to access an array of online tools that allow the Veteran to apply for benefits, download DD-214's and other military records, and check the status of a pending claim. You must be enrolled in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting

System (DEERS) to create an account. Go to [ebenefits.va.gov](http://ebenefits.va.gov) to register for level one access. Upon completing level one registration, go to the Providence VA Regional Office to register for level two access.

For more info, visit [ebenefit.va.gov](http://ebenefit.va.gov).

# CHIEF JUSTICE WILLIAMS

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ham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission.

Chief Justice Williams is also well known in Rhode Island as an accomplished amateur chef, having appeared as a guest on the cooking

show *Ciao Italia* with Mary Esposito. I can personally attest to his cooking ability, most recently tasting his gourmet desserts.

Chief Justice Williams, we thank you for your

accomplishments, leadership, and commitment to our Veterans. We thank you for your service to the citizens of Rhode Island, and most of all to this great country.